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ABSTRACT

As one of the largest school districts in the country, Dallas faces unique challenges in improving education and has developed a system for ranking schools based on achievement outcomes. This paper presents findings of a study that compared groups of effective and ineffective Dallas public schools in order to identify factors for success. Data were gathered from a districtwide survey of 1,860 teachers at effective schools and 1,629 teachers at ineffective schools; a comparison of demographic data from 52 K-6 elementary schools (26 effective and 26 ineffective); observations; and interviews with all principals. Findings indicate that there were no differences between effective and ineffective schools in ethnicity or percentages of special populations; however, large schools tended to be ineffective. Effective schools were characterized by: (1) principals' willingness to hold teachers accountable; (2) staffs' high expectations for students; (3) emphasis on student responsibility; (4) a cohesive staff; (5) quality teachers and instruction; (6) preventative control of environment; (7) flexible school organization; and (8) a sense of community. Ten tables are included. The appendix contains the observation instrument. (Contains 13 references.) (LMI)

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Effective Schools: Is There a Winning Combination of Administrators, Teachers and Students?

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Introduction

Research findings show that varying administrative and teaching skills, and methods of motivating students for learning, combined with favorable school environments, are associated with effective schools (Squires, Huitt, & Segars, 1989; Mells, 1994; Taylor, 1990). Findings also show that schools can promote exceptional student achievement even in poor neighborhood schools (Clark, Lotto, and McCarthy 1980; Levine, Levine, & Eubanks, 1984; Mells, 1994) and that principals can directly and indirectly promote performance of students in school (Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Gezi, 1990; Burlingame, 1986). The literature is still quite sparse, however, on the combination of educational processes that consistently produce effective schools or give results that are generalizable. Instruments that can accurately isolate and measure the impact of these factors individually are not available.

Recent advances in the measurement field provide tools to measure the combined effect of various factors associated with educational progress in order to identify effective schools (Bingham, Heywood, & White, 1991; Crone, Lang, & Franklin, 1994; Webster, Mendro, & Almaguer, 1993). As one of the largest school districts in the country, Dallas faces some unique challenges in improving education. There are schools with all students receiving free lunch and others with high percentages of students from upper-income families. There are neighborhood schools and schools whose entire population is bused from outside the neighborhood. Some schools are quite successful and others are not. Dallas Public Schools (DPS) has developed a system for ranking schools based on achievement outcomes. (This accountability system will be briefly described later in this paper.) Using this ranking system, two groups of elementary schools were identified: effective schools and ineffective schools. This project was designed to compare groups of effective and ineffective schools and to identify what factors, if any, could be generalized from the effective schools in this large urban district to schools that were not so successful; or, on the other hand, to critically consider whether schools are so different that what promotes success in one school will not work in another.

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Methodology

Schools were selected using a quantitative approach (rankings of schools within the DPS accountability system); the procedures used to gather data and make comparisons were both quantitative and qualitative. The overall study methodology and instruments were designed by a team of evaluation specialists within the Research and Evaluation Department (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Miles & Huberman, 1984). This study was the first phase of an ongoing study to examine factors within the Dallas schools that might be critical contributors to success on the District's School Effectiveness Indices. The study included several components: a teacher survey administered districtwide, comparisons of demographic data, and school visitations including classroom observations, interviews with principals, and school climate observations.

As the Dallas accountability system equalizes schools, there are examples of effective schools and ineffective schools throughout the city. In brief, the system establishes expected outcomes based on student history and patterns of like students and then compares student outcomes with expectations. Schools are ranked based on rates of student growth. In this "values-added" model, effectiveness is associated with measured performance above or below what occurs across the entire district. Levels of accomplishment are determined for each student and then student results are aggregated by school. Statistical procedures used in the model (multiple regression analysis for student level variables and hierarchical linear modeling for school level variables) control for effects of gender, ethnicity, socioecomomic status, and language proficiency at the student level and, at the school level, crowding and mobility. The model also controls for the beginning level of student performance. Thus, School Effectiveness Indices provide a measure of each school's capacity to affect performance when ability and other achievement-related factors are controlled. (For more details on the School Effectiveness Indices, see Webster, Mendro, Almaguer, 1993; Webster & Mendro, 1994.)

Teacher Survey

Each year the district conducts a survey of its teachers. Statistical comparisons were run between responses from two groups of teachers: those at "effective" schools (N=1860) and those at "ineffective" schools (N=1629). Effective schools were defined as those schools that had been in the top 40% of the School Effectiveness Indices for two years in a row; ineffective schools were those that had been in the bottom 40% of the Indices for two years in a row. There were 46 elementary, middle, and high schools in the effective category and 49 in the ineffective category. Comparisons were run on three areas covered by the annual teacher survey: teachers' perceptions of their influence on school policy, teachers' ratings of problems in the schools, and teachers' beliefs about students. (For the teacher survey portion of the study, teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools were included.)

Demographic Analysis

Demographic comparisons were run on the 26 effective and the 26 ineffective K-6 elementary schools. Because of small sample sizes, similar comparisons were not run for

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K-3 elementary and 4-6 elementary schools. Comparisons were run on ethnicity, average daily membership and attendance, socioeconomic status, special populations, and mobility rates.

School Visitations

In order to keep the study manageable in the time allowed, the sample of schools to be visited was limited to elementary schools in the top 25% and in the bottom 25% of the School Effectiveness Indices for two years in a row. Since leadership has been identified as a critical factor in effectiveness, any schools that had a change in principal in the previous year were eliminated. When schools with principal changes were eliminated and equal numbers of effective and low performing schools were selected, 14 elementary schools were included.

Eleven evaluators participated in classroom observations. Using an observation form developed by the research team, each evaluator observed classes in both ineffective and effective schools. (See appendix for copy of instrument.) Unfortunately, since the ranking of schools is public information, it was not possible to do "blind observations;" evaluators knew whether a particular school was considered effective or low performing. At the K-3 and K-6 schools, classes were observed at grades 1, 3, and 5. At the 4-6 schools, classes were observed at grades 4 and 6. On the average, six observations were made at each K-6 school and four at each 4-6 and K-3 school. Since each evaluator made no more than two observations at a school, most schools had at least three different evaluators visit them. Classroom observations lasted 30-45 minutes. In addition, observers spent about 15 minutes looking at lessons plans and student work and, when possible, interviewing the teacher. In all, 36 classrooms were observed in the ineffective elementary schools and 46 classrooms were observed in the effective elementary schools.

Observations were coded and comparisons were made on such factors as classroom management, teacher behaviors, level of skills covered in observed lesson, students on task, instructional methods, classroom disruptions, and teacher-student and student-student interactions. Observer comments were categorized as positive, negative, or neutral and were compared for the two groups of schools. Following the coding and analysis of individual items on the observation forms, three readers evaluated each teacher as good, average or poor based on a holistic reading of the observation. Percentages of good, average, and poor teachers, as judged by the three readers, were compared for the effective and ineffective schools.

Every evaluator who visited a school also conducted a walk-through of the school using an instrument developed by the research team. (See appendix for instrument.) Many of the evaluators were familiar with the schools because of other evaluation projects (Chapter I, magnet schools, bilingual programs, etc.) At the end of the study, the evaluators met as a group to discuss and ultimately describe each school's climate.

Interviews with all principals were conducted by the primary researcher. While the interviews followed a similar format (see appendix for interview format), questions were open-ended to allow principals to discuss the factors they felt were most important.

Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to almost two hours. In one instance, the interview was conducted "on the run" while following a principal on her usual rounds of the school. Interview notes were coded according to several themes and analyzed for patterns between effective and ineffective schools. Themes included description of community, description of staff, organization of school, community/parental support, attributions of success/failure, and school policy and philosophy.

Results

Teacher Survey

Teachers were asked to rate the amount of influence they had on 10 items related to school policy. Ratings ranged from "no influence" (1) to "a great deal of influence" (4). T-tests were run on group means for two groups of teachers: those at the effective schools (N=1860) and those at the ineffective schools (N=1629). No significant differences were found on two items: 1) selecting textbooks and other instructional materials and 2) evaluating teachers. On the other eight items, teachers at the effective schools seemed to believe they had more influence. Table 1 lists the eight significant items, the means for each group, and the *p* value. Items are listed in order of most to least amount of influence according to teachers at the effective schools.

Table 1
Items Showing Significant Differences Between Teachers
At Ineffective and Effective Schools

	Means Ineffective Schools	Means Effective Schools	*p*
Evaluating and grading students	3.294	3.456	.000
Selecting teaching techniques	3.175	3.381	.000
Selecting content, topics, and skills to be taught	2.728	2.837	.002
Determining content of in-service programs	2.573	2.650	.025
Grouping students for instruction	2.417	2.547	.001
Determining discipline procedures	2.298	2.476	.000
Establishing curriculum	2.301	2.473	.000
Giving input on budgetary matters	2.000	2.087	.011

Teachers were asked to rate the seriousness of various problems in the schools. All 22 problems were perceived as more serious in the ineffective than in the effective schools ($p < .001$). Table 2 lists the problems and group means. Problems are listed in order of seriousness as rated by the teachers at the ineffective schools. In the ineffective schools, lack of parent involvement was seen as the number one problem, followed by students not doing their homework, and then poverty. In the effective schools, students not doing their homework was the number one problem, followed by student tardiness, and then student disrespect for teachers.

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Table 2
Problems Rated Significantly Different by Teachers
At Ineffective and Effective Schools

Problem	Means Ineffective Schools	Means Effective Schools	*p*
Lack of parent involvement	3.25	2.56	.000
Students not doing their homework	3.13	2.78	.000
Poverty	3.06	2.51	.000
Student disrespect for teachers	2.98	2.64	.000
Student tardiness	2.89	2.68	.000
Student absenteeism	2.88	2.50	.000
Student apathy	2.86	2.50	.000
Student verbal abuse of teachers	2.70	2.38	.000
Physical conflicts among students	2.64	2.38	.000
Vandalism of school property	2.61	2.29	.000
Class Size	2.55	2.27	.000
Students cutting classes	2.28	1.87	.000
Teacher absenteeism	2.26	2.02	.000
Cultural conflict	2.18	2.00	.000
Racial tension	2.17	2.03	.000
Students dropping out	2.13	1.70	.000
Student pregnancy	1.94	1.59	.000
Lack of academic challenge for students	1.93	1.69	.000
Student drug abuse	1.86	1.62	.000
Student possession of weapons	1.85	1.67	.000
Student physical abuse of teachers	1.84	1.63	.000
Student use of alcohol	1.76	1.55	.000

Three items measured teachers' beliefs about students: one concerned attitudes and habits, one concerned capabilities, and the third concerned behaviors. While over 80% of the teachers in the district said that students are capable of learning the material, more than half felt that the attitudes and habits of most students reduce their chances for academic success and that the level of students' misbehavior in the school interfered with their teaching. Results were somewhat different for the teachers at the ineffective and teachers at the effective schools. A higher percentage of teachers at the ineffective schools felt that the attitudes and habits students bring to class reduce their chance for success and that the level of students' misbehavior (e.g. noise, horseplay or fighting in the halls, cafeteria, or student lounge) interfered with their teaching. Table 3 shows the percentages of teachers in each of the groups that strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, and strongly disagreed with the three statements.

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Table 3
Responses of Teachers at Ineffective and Effective Schools
Concerning Attitudes and Habits of Students

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. The attitudes and habits most students bring to my class greatly reduce their chances for academic success.				
Ineffective	30.1%	35.3%	26.3%	8.2%
Effective	18.2%	29.3%	37.3%	15.1%
2. Most students in my class(es) are capable of learning the material I am supposed to teach them.				
Ineffective	34.0%	49.0%	11.4%	5.5%
Effective	42.1%	47.0%	7.1%	3.8%
3. The level of students' misbehavior (e.g. noise, horseplay or fighting in the halls, cafeteria, or student lounge) in this school interferes with my teaching.				
Ineffective	30.5%	27.1%	30.2%	12.1%
Effective	18.1%	25.5%	37.6%	18.7%

Demographic Analysis

Several demographic comparisons were run between the 26 effective K-6 schools and 26 ineffective K-6 schools. (Demographic data can be found in Tables 7 and 8 in the appendix.) Significant differences were found in average daily membership, attendance, percent of population on free lunch, and mobility rates. No significant differences were found in ethnic composition of schools and percentages of special populations (special education and limited English proficient.)

In the ineffective K-6 schools, size ranged from 289 to 1269. Eight of the 26 ineffective K-6 schools had over 800 students; three had over 1000 students. In the effective K-6 schools, membership ranged from 326 to 776. None of the effective schools had over 800 students. While average daily membership of the two groups of schools was significantly different, it should be noted that, with the exception of eight ineffective schools with exceptionally large memberships, most of the schools had between 400 and 800 students.

The average daily attendance for the district was 94.7%. In the ineffective K-6 schools, attendance ranged from 91% to 95.4%. All but six of the schools had attendance rates lower than the district average. In the effective schools, attendance ranged from 94.2% to 98% with 18 schools having attendance rates higher than the district average. In the ineffective schools, at least 60% of the students at each school received free or reduced lunch. In the effective schools, 12 schools had at least 60% of their students on the lunch program. The average mobility rate (average yearly transactions per 100

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students) for K-6 schools in Dallas in 1993 was 31%. Sixteen of the ineffective and 10 of the effective schools had mobility rates over 40%.

Classroom Observations

For the most part, all observed classes started quickly, teacher's materials and supplies were ready, and classroom had colorful and age-appropriate bulletin boards. Instructional methods and materials were similar at the two groups of schools and most teachers (83%) used whole group approaches. Students in effective schools were more likely to bring needed supplies to class. In almost one-third (31%) of the classes observed in the ineffective schools and 7% of the classes observed in the effective schools, one or more students did not bring supplies to class.

Of the nine items related to teacher behaviors and curriculum, only four showed significant differences. Two had to do with clear instructions and clear feedback. Higher percentages of teachers at the effective schools often provided clear instructions and clear feedback.. In the ineffective schools, 11% of the teachers observed seldom provided clear instructions and 14% seldom provided clear feedback. The other major differences had to do with the level of skills being taught. In the ineffective schools, 69% of the classes observed often worked on lower level skills. In effective schools, the percentage was 48%. In contrast, almost twice as many of the classes observed in the effective schools often worked on higher order skills (41% compared to 22% in the ineffective schools.

Differences between numbers of students on task at ineffective and effective schools were not significant, but there was a significant difference between numbers of students who were actively participating and seemed excited about the learning activity. In the ineffective schools, in one-third (33%) of the classes observed, most or all of the students seemed engaged; in 42% of the observations, few of the students seemed engaged. In one-half (50%) of the classes observed in the effective schools, most or all of the students seemed engaged; in 22% of the observations, few of the students seemed engaged. Comments from several observers at one of the ineffective schools indicated that curriculum had been watered down and there was little being done to challenge students. Table 4 provides percentages of students on task and engaged at each group of schools.

Table 4
Percentages of Students On Task and Engaged in Learning
At Ineffective and Effective Schools

	Less Effective			More Effective		
Students	few	some	most	few	some	most
On Task	8%	31%	61%	2%	24%	74%
Engaged	42%	25%	33%	22%	22%	50%

A higher percentage of disruptions were noted in the ineffective schools (70% as opposed to 59% in the effective schools). Disruptions included such events as

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administrative interruptions, intercom announcements, and student behaviors. Of the disruptions in the ineffective schools, 64% were resolved quickly and with little learning time lost for students. Of the disruptions noted in the effective schools, 89% seemed to be resolved quickly.

Positive teacher-student interactions were observed in almost all classes. In about one-fifth of the observations, negative student-student interactions were reported. Of the 19 negative student-student interactions reported, 5 occurred in the effective schools and 14 occurred in the ineffective schools. Negative interactions included making fun of a student, hitting or pushing, and arguing. Off-task talking was not counted as negative unless there was animosity expressed.

Many of the observers added spontaneous comments that reflected an overall judgment of the teacher and/or the class. Comments were categorized as positive (+), negative (-), and neutral (N). The following table provides numbers of observations with positive, negative and neutral comments. The effective schools had over twice as many observations with positive comments as the ineffective schools. In addition, the ineffective schools had almost three times the number of observations with negative comments as the effective schools. Examples of both positive and negative comments from ineffective and effective schools are included on the table.

Table 5
Observer Comments on Observation Forms

	+	-	N	Examples +	Examples -
Ineffective Schools	8	14	5	Allowed students to lead and work together. Facilitated process with ease. All students treated with respect. Several students helped each other. Disruptions handled quickly, quietly. Made quick transitions.	Students were unengaged except for 3 girls. Girls worked, boys totally uninterested. Most interrupted class. Spent quite a lot of time disciplining.
Effective Schools	20	5	5	A nice lesson for a beginning teacher. With experience, she'll be outstanding. All active instruction. Very enthusiastic. Drives kids hard. Excellent teacher.	Frontal, teacher-centered instruction. Students about as bored as I was. Constant noise during instruction. Spoke louder and louder. Did not have control.

In order to help answer the question "Do effective schools have a higher percentage of good teachers than the ineffective schools?," three readers evaluated the teachers as good (3), average (2-, 2, or 2+), or poor (1) based on information provided on the observation forms. The forms were coded so readers did not know the teacher's name, school, or effectiveness category, but did know the grade level. Discussions were held in order to come to a consensus on cases on which there were varied ratings. Of 82 teachers, 16 were rated good, 44 were rated average, and 22 were rated poor. As can be

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seen in the following table, there was a slightly higher percentage of good teachers at the effective schools and a much higher percentage of poor teachers at the ineffective schools.

Table 6
Number and Percent of Teachers Rated Good, Average and Poor
At Ineffective and Effective Schools

	Ineffective		Effective	
Rating	#	%	#	%
Good	6	17%	10	22%
Average	15	42%	29	63%
Poor	15	42%	7	15%
Total	36		46	

Interviews with Principals

Principals were asked to describe the communities their schools served, the organization of the school, their staffs, special programs, problems or concerns, and outside support. Principals knew why their schools were selected for the study (being at the top or bottom of the School Effectiveness Indices for two years) and were inclined to explain their position in the rankings. Principals at the bottom of the rankings concentrated on explaining problems within the schools and communities while principals at the top of the rankings were more likely to praise their staffs and programs. Because of this tendency to defend a position and because of the small sample size, any conclusions drawn are tentative and, rather, should be considered as pointers toward areas for more extensive research.

When principals at the ineffective schools described their schools, they were quick to point out community problems and lack of community support. On the other hand, when asked why their schools were successful, principals at the effective schools were least likely to detail community factors. The effective schools with extreme community problems acknowledged the problems, but seemed to be determined to do the best they could while the students were in the classrooms and not to use family and community problems as excuses for poor performance. In the effective schools, even those that lacked cohesive outside communities, there seemed to be a feeling of community fostered within the school.

Several principals at ineffective schools named turnover and/or vacancies as a problem. At one school, the principal cited lack of turnover as a possible problem. Teachers had been in the community for a long time, had seen dramatic socioeconomic changes, and in spite of the changes, "keep doing what used to work." Two of the principals of ineffective schools said that positions have remained open; one lacked a sixth grade teacher for two-thirds of the year (92-93). Another continues to have difficulty filling positions and getting substitutes. Principals at the effective schools seemed to be fairly satisfied with their staffs and seemed to be more willing to confront

and get rid of poor teachers. Teachers' high expectations of students also seemed to be important.

From descriptions of principals, flexibility seemed to be one of the keys at the effective schools. Also, teachers at the effective schools may have a greater degree of involvement and power in the decision-making process. While several of the principals at the ineffective schools cited team-building as a high priority, the collaboration and teamwork approach seemed to be much better established at the effective schools.

While some schools seemed to have built their curriculum around the *Texas Assessment of Academic Skills* (*TAAS*), an effective school principal made the statement that "If teachers teach everyday, *TAAS* will take care of itself." This philosophy seemed to be repeated at other effective schools. Comments from principals included: "Teachers are free to use whatever curriculum they think is best for the population served." "Teachers have evolved their own methods of what works with this population." "The focus is consistently on teaching and teachers are not given any extra duties (lunchroom, playground, bus, etc.)." It should be noted however that all schools, but particularly the ineffective ones, were under district directives (and monitoring) to improve *TAAS* scores. Thus, an inordinate amount of emphasis was placed on *TAAS*.

Discussion

Cohesive Staff and Strong Leadership

Results from the annual teacher survey showed that the perception of teacher influence over various curriculum and organizational decisions is higher at the effective schools than at the ineffective schools. From interviews with principals and teachers, and from evaluator observations, this perception is probably correct. Teachers at the effective schools seem to participate more in decision-making. Whether this is a factor in effectiveness or results from a school being effective based on other factors is difficult to determine. Low performing schools have been under pressure from the school board and administration to improve. They are monitored closely. Decisions, therefore, tend to be top-down. Effective schools, on the other hand, are not monitored so closely and thus, may have more freedom in decision-making.

Whether it was a result of the pressure to improve test scores or whether it is a factor in ineffectiveness, staffs at the ineffective schools seemed to be more splintered. Staffs at the effective schools seemed to work more collaboratively; there was a sense of community within the schools. At the ineffective schools, everyone was looking for reasons for failure. No one likes to believe that he or she is at fault, and some teachers and principals were quick to name specific "problem" teachers. As a group, principals at the effective schools seemed to be more willing to confront ineffective teachers and, when necessary, take steps to get rid of them. The effective schools were able to create communities in which staffs worked together. Energy was aimed at solving problems and creating positive learning environments. Both administrators and teachers in the effective schools seemed willing to confront issues and learn new skills. Leadership styles of the principals at the effective schools varied immensely. Generalizations cannot

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be made other than that the principals set positive examples, could be described as proactive rather than reactive, and were willing to confront and get rid of poor teachers when necessary. Further conclusions would require in-depth study of leadership styles within the cultural context of the particular schools.

Creating a positive learning environment meant an inordinate amount of attention to detail, not only so that students were challenged with interesting projects, but also so that students had less opportunity to be off task or to get into trouble. At the effective schools, there was a realistic understanding of children and adolescents and policies were established that might be described as "preventative control" procedures. Activities like getting from class to an assembly were not left to chance. At a couple of the ineffective schools, on the other hand, there seemed to be a lot of chaos in the halls, complete with teachers yelling constantly at students.

Problems in the Schools/Communities

Effective school seemed to have a sense of community with shared goals and collaborative efforts to achieve goals. In cases in which there was not a great deal of outside parental or community support, effective schools had achieved community within the schools. While community factors were often similar in both groups of schools, principals and teachers at ineffective schools were quick to point out community problems and lack of community support; principals and teachers at effective schools were least likely to detail community factors.

Teachers judged problems in the ineffective schools as more serious than in the effective schools. The demographic analysis showed that there were no significant differences in ethnicity or in percentages of special populations (limited English proficient, special education) but there were significant differences in size of school, attendance rates, percentages of students on free lunch and in mobility. However, it should be noted that there are some effective schools with high levels of poverty, high levels of problems in the schools, and high mobility rates. Size of school may be a factor when schools become very large. No effective school had more than 800 students while eight of the 26 low performing elementary schools had over 800.

Beliefs about Students

Based on evaluator observations in classrooms and hallways, beliefs about students was probably a more important factor than was captured by the teacher survey. While some differences between the ineffective and effective schools were found on the survey, attitudes expressed by some teachers and principals and interactions observed by the evaluators seemed to indicate a lack of belief in students at some of the ineffective schools. While these beliefs were not universal, they were expressed openly by several staff members at some of the ineffective schools. Teachers offered reasons for students not performing better that included abuse in the homes, lack of parental support, uneducated parents, gang activity, and other problems in the community. A principal or a teacher who openly says "Look what we have to put up with" seems to be expressing an attitude of resignation. With the exception of two schools, the effective schools that were

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visited had similar populations with similar problems. While there was an acknowledgment of the severity of the problems, the attitude at the effective schools could probably be described as one of "tough love." Students were held accountable while they were at school. The difference in attitude may be a critical factor in providing a stable, structured, calm workplace in a chaotic world. When teachers hold an overt or covert belief in a lack of students' abilities, there may be less incentive for the teachers to expend the amount of effort and energy required to create a true learning environment. Attitudes and beliefs about students influence the commitment of the teacher, the types of assignments that are given, and the way students are treated in the classrooms and halls.

Instruction

The basic curriculum is prescribed by the district. Teachers use similar methods and similar materials. Teachers at the effective schools, however, seemed to have more freedom or be more willing to expand or experiment with the curriculum. While there were "good" teachers and "poor" teachers at both groups of schools, from the classroom observation ratings, the evaluators comments, and the judgment of the readers, it can be concluded that the ineffective schools had a higher percentage of poor teachers than the effective schools. A couple of the effective schools described systems in place to mentor new and or weak teachers. As a group, teachers at the effective schools were more likely to provide clear instructions and clear feedback and to work on higher level skills. More students in the effective schools seemed to be engaged in learning. Ineffective schools seemed to have more disruptions during classtime and there were more instances of negative student-student interactions.

Summary

In the course of this study, several factors were identified as important contributors to effectiveness. These could be summarized as follows:

1. Principal willing to hold teachers accountable (confront, document, and terminate if necessary); principal sets positive tone; principal has skills in, problem solving, personnel management, and is proactive rather than reactive.
2. Genuine belief in capabilities of students; high expectations.
3. Tough love: principal and teachers genuinely like students and hold them responsible.
4. Cohesive staff: teachers work together; good relationships among teachers.
5. Instruction: high interest, good pace, involved students; absence of weak teachers; system in place to mentor new teachers or weaker teachers.
6. Preventative control of environment: attention to details so students have less opportunity to be off task or tempted to cause trouble; realistic understanding of children and adolescents.
7. Organization: flexible according to needs of school; teachers have input.
8. Sense of community: if community does not exist outside school, community is established within school; caring staff; pride in environment (attractive environment, not cluttered or chaotic)

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Because the schools studied were extremely different, few conclusions about the effective schools can be applied to all effective schools. What works in one school with a particular combination of student/teacher/administrator variables may not be the best approach in another school. If there were a single formula, the differences in leadership styles, school organizations, and school climates would not be so varied within a single district. It is our conclusion, after comparing the effective and ineffective schools in this district that none of the identified factors alone is sufficient to create an effective school. They are all important. While many of these factors were also in place at the ineffective schools, any one factor missing could be detrimental to the overall school. The schools that were ineffective had various pieces of the puzzle but lacked others. Some lacked in one area, others in another. Few generalizations about the group of ineffective schools can be applied to each school.

As pointed out earlier, the findings of this study should be considered areas for further investigation. This study is the beginning of an ongoing effort in the Dallas Public Schools to understand the complex nature of school effectiveness. In order to bring about positive changes in the schools, more attention must be given to each of the processes and to the interrelationships that result in higher rates of student success and achievement.

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APPENDIX

Table 9
Demographic Data for Ineffective K-6 Elementary Schools

Ineffective Schools	ADM	ADA	Ethnicity				Lunch Status		Language Prof		Special Ed		Mobility	Stability
			%W	%B	%H	%O	#Ln	%Ln	#LEP	%LEP	#SE	%SE		
N-1	846	94.9	30	39	29	2	645	76	146	17	66	8	37.1	86.4
N-2	545	94.3	20	0	79	1	523	96	260	48	42	8	36.1	88.3
N-3	590	94.6	11	54	35	0	532	90	94	16	25	4	37.1	86.0
N-4	943	92.9	5	11	83	1	932	99	548	58	47	5	65.4	81.7
N-5	750	95.4	1	58	41	0	675	90	218	29	31	4	38.4	86.8
N-6	1269	94.4	4	34	62	0	1249	98	577	45	69	5	46.2	81.4
N-7	865	93.9	2	66	31	0	723	84	195	23	46	5	42.5	83.4
N-8	709	94.9	18	51	30	1	574	81	127	18	70	10	35.2	87.4
N-9	841	94.4	6	25	68	1	713	85	320	38	70	8	33.8	87.0
N-10	289	93.5	0	81	19	0	289	100	41	14	14	5	46.5	84.4
N-11	653	93.5	0	82	18	0	614	94	65	10	38	6	42.2	84.5
N-12	678	93.9	70	13	16	1	417	62	49	7	57	8	45.6	87.9
N-13	601	93.4	64	7	27	2	398	66	76	13	57	9	49.0	84.4
N-14	767	94.2	13	11	75	2	620	81	286	37	75	10	20.1	93.5
N-15	674	94.9	1	98	1	0	553	82	1	0	42	6	32.3	86.5
N-16	979	94.4	5	17	73	5	897	92	484	49	47	5	66.2	81.8
N-17	546	94.3	1	94	6	0	503	92	21	4	34	6	27.4	89.8
N-18	637	94.9	1	85	13	0	587	92	50	8	57	9	33.2	86.1
N-19	468	92.1	75	4	20	1	314	67	38	8	67	14	56.8	83.2
N-20	634	93.9	40	8	50	3	413	65	205	32	89	14	57.8	89.7
N-21	529	91.0	5	72	22	1	508	96	73	14	69	13	52.0	81.8
N-22	1245	94.6	9	65	23	2	965	78	169	14	67	5	45.1	86.0
N-23	529	94.0	3	23	64	10	529	100	274	52	63	12	46.6	82.9
N-24	799	93.5	27	41	25	8	610	76	115	14	76	10	47.5	84.2
N-25	1036	94.9	2	89	8	1	791	76	58	6	80	8	49.7	81.4
N-26	381	94.4	0	83	17	0	379	99	39	10	45	12	52.9	78.4

Paper presented at AERA, April 1995, San Francisco.

Table 10
Demographic Data for Effective K-6 Elementary Schools

Effective Schools	ADM	ADA	Ethnicity				Lunch Status		Language Prof		Special Ed		Mobility	Stability
			%W	%B	%H	%O	#Ln	%Ln	#LEP	%LEP	#SE	%SE		
E-1	522	95.3	61	18	14	7	151	29	26	5	49	9	46.2	86.0
E-2	469	96.8	0	99	1	0	261	56	2	0	43	9	29.0	92.3
E-3	326	94.4	0	100	0	0	326	100	0	0	26	8	56.3	81.3
E-4	571	96.1	44	15	36	4	269	47	140	25	62	11	37.5	85.0
E-5	772	94.2	44	16	36	5	513	66	181	23	112	15	37.4	86.0
E-6	603	95.1	0	99	1	0	558	93	3	0	31	5	33.4	87.7
E-7	347	95.8	5	23	56	16	336	97	182	52	17	5	66.0	71.7
E-8	469	95.8	32	40	20	8	239	51	50	11	41	9	38.7	85.0
E-9	577	94.4	49	11	34	6	283	49	119	21	44	8	40.5	88.3
E-10	504	95.6	57	14	27	2	152	30	28	6	121	24	22.0	92.3
E-11	644	95.4	56	9	32	3	329	51	68	11	84	13	33.8	89.5
E-12	776	95.2	58	12	21	9	288	37	104	13	50	6	32.2	91.4
E-13	558	95.0	14	8	77	2	467	84	228	41	49	9	42.6	87.0
E-14	664	95.4	11	16	67	7	597	90	370	56	36	5	51.9	81.2
E-15	508	96.4	1	98	1	0	295	58	1	0	29	6	27.7	91.4
E-16	692	95.9	0	96	4	0	532	77	7	1	41	6	49.1	80.7
E-17	763	95.0	5	3	91	1	749	98	391	51	53	7	33.9	87.1
E-18	741	94.5	35	26	37	4	392	53	211	28	48	6	48.0	86.1
E-19	735	94.6	60	22	17	1	257	35	64	9	82	11	42.6	86.7
E-20	578	94.3	1	22	77	1	579	100	310	54	48	8	43.7	84.6
E-21	712	96.1	0	99	1	0	462	65	2	0	38	5	17.0	93.3
E-22	674	98.0	0	100	0	0	180	27	0	0	30	4	15.6	92.9
E-23	579	94.7	22	15	63	1	500	86	220	38	40	7	35.1	86.6
E-24	488	95.6	54	12	33	2	122	25	26	5	82	17	13.1	95.0
E-25	480	94.6	19	44	36	1	420	88	99	21	62	13	38.9	89.5
E-26	703	95.6	55	7	35	3	262	37	171	24	46	7	27.5	88.6

Observation Instrument

Date:_____School:_____ Observer: _____
Teacher_____ Grade: _____ Subject _____
Beginning Time: _____ Ending Time:_____

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

What was the objective of the lesson?

What activities and materials were used during the lesson?

Place a check by each statement that is true.

____ Class started quickly.
____ The teacher's materials and supplies were ready.
____ The students brought needed supplies to class.
____ Bulletin boards were colorful and age appropriate.

How often did the teacher do the following? (Please circle the number that best describes how often each behavior was demonstrated.)

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	NA
Provided clear instructions	5	4	3	2	1	0
Provided clear feedback	5	4	3	2	1	0
Provided correction with feedback	5	4	3	2	1	0
Praised students for work well done	5	4	3	2	1	0
Reacted negatively to discipline problems	5	4	3	2	1	0
Worked on lower level skills	5	4	3	2	1	0
Worked on higher-order skills	5	4	3	2	1	0
Checked for understanding	5	4	3	2	1	0
Responded to students' request for help	5	4	3	2	1	0

How often were the following instructional methods used?

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	NA
Whole-group	5	4	3	2	1	0
Independent activities	5	4	3	2	1	0
Small groups	5	4	3	2	1	0
Cooperative learning	5	4	3	2	1	0

How many students demonstrated the following levels of participation?

	All	Most	Some	Few	None
Off task	5	4	3	2	1
On task (participating in activity)	5	4	3	2	1
Engaged (participating and appear excited about activities)	5	4	3	2	1

CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE

Examples of teacher-student interactions:

Positive:

Negative:

Examples of student-student interactions:

Positive:

Negative:

Examples of how classroom disruptions were handled (e.g., administrative matters, behaviors, teacher's responses, student's responses):

Draw a map of the physical space. Include all significant objects and their arrangements.

Describe what is displayed on the walls. (Include student work as well as teacher displays.)

AFTER THE OBSERVATION

Ask the teacher the following questions:

Was this a typical class session? If not, what was unusual?

What homework has been assigned for this week. (List all assignments.)

How would you describe the progress of this class?

How do you communicate with parents?

Student work portfolios or folders:

How do you decide what work to include in the portfolios?

(Ask to see an exemplary student's work folder and fill out the checklist on the following page.)

Lesson Plans:

Did the session you observe match what was in the lesson plan for the day?

Look at the lesson plans for the week. How detailed are they? Do they include enrichment activities or do they simply follow a set curriculum? (Is there any evidence of modification of curriculum to fit the class or individual differences within the class?)

Look at a student portfolio and provide a count of the type of work samples in them.

Type of work sample	Count	Comments/descriptions
worksheets (basic skills)		
worksheets (higher order thinking)		
individual writing		
journal entries		
compositions or essays		
book reports		
art work (lower level skills)		
art work (individual creativity)		
projects reflecting integration of subjects		
tests		
computation - basic skills		
mathematical problem solving involving higher order thinking		

School Walk-Through

Describe your impressions of the following:

1. Building
outside (attractiveness, accessible for visitors, parking):

cleanliness inside:

hallways (attractive, displays, bare?)

2. Atmosphere
cheerful, receptive presence, level of comfort

movement of students in building

how received as visitor? How react to stranger walking through halls?

3. Office
reception, friendliness, helpfulness, treated as valued individual:

openness, place to sit, attractiveness:

4. Classrooms
atmosphere for learning:

bulletin boards - (Are ongoing projects displayed?)

reaction to strangers, behavior of students to stranger

5. Community outreach/parental involvement
evidence of communication to parents:

parent resource center:

any parents in the building?

6. Cafeteria
cleanliness:

how set up for scheduling

Principal Interview

1. **Description of school.**
2. **Factors of effectiveness:**

How would you define an effective school?

3. **Staff**

Strengths of staff? (What impact do your excellent teachers have on your school?)
Limitations of staff?
Examples of commitment of time and energy on the part of staff.
Examples of how teachers work together.
Examples of coordination/communications among teachers. (What structures are in place to assure communication across and within grades?)
Staffing problems (what input on hiring? delays in filling positions? permanent subs?)
What help is available for poor or marginal teachers?
If a teacher does not improve after help, then what?
What methods are used to help teachers develop more effective teaching strategies?)
What percent of your teachers would you place in each of the following categories?

poor ____%
fair ____%
good ____%
excellent ____%

How do you solicit input from teachers on school policies?

4. **Students**

Strengths of student population?
Limitations of student population?
How are students assigned to classes?
How are students recognized for success?

5. **Community involvement**

What involvement do you have from parents and the community?
Does school have an adoptor?
How are parents kept informed?

6. **Personal**

Background (Teacher? Subject, grade-level? Enjoy teaching?)
Why did you become a principal? How long at this school?
How would you describe your role? (examples: instructional leader, chief disciplinarian, chief executive officer, coordinator of educational resources, consensus builder)
What innovations in the curriculum have you introduced or supported since you have been here?

Ask for copy of discipline plan.
Ask for copy of budget.